

Assessments; Estimates; Goals and Priorities; Strategies; and Progress Reports - Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds of Innovation and Expansion Activities

Progress in Accomplishing Strategies and Goals

This section of the State Plan is a summary of the progress in accomplishing the Strategies and Goals as identified in Division of Rehabilitation Services State Plan Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and 4.11(d).

Goal 1: Students will enter their adult lives capable of self-advocacy with sufficient experience to make choices about work and career, being appropriately supported and living as independently as possible.

Strategy 1.1: Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services for clients who are attending post-secondary programs.

Division Activities: The Division provides vocational guidance and counseling to assist students with choosing an appropriate post-secondary goal consistent with their interests and abilities. Activities included:

- The Division presented at the TRIO Conference in October, 2015.
- The Division works with all Disability Coordinators at the post-secondary facilities and hosts an annual meeting in Chamberlain, SD in June.
- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Program collaborated with five post-secondary institutes in the state to host five “Catch the Wave” events. These are one day workshops intended for high school students planning to attend post-secondary educational opportunities. Attendance numbers included a total of 480 individuals: Seventy-nine (79) – Mitchell Technical Institute (MTI), one hundred-thirty-six (136) – Black Hills State University (BHSU), Sixty-three (63) – Northern State University (NSU), ninety-five (95) – Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI), one hundred-seven (107) – University of South Dakota (USD).

Strategy 1.2: Increase and strengthen transition services for eligible students who are exploring their employment future.

Division Activities: The Division provides transition services to 151 public school districts and 20 Tribal/Bureau of Indian Education Schools. The Division promotes early involvement at Individual Education Plan meetings. Transition services available from the Division include Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor attendance at Individual Education Plans, vocational guidance and counseling, Project Skills, Youth Leadership Forum and Catch the Wave. In FFY 2015 the Division had the following service outcomes:

- 384 students with disabilities participated in Project Skills. Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities on an IEP to provide them with real world work experiences to develop work skills and determine interest areas.
- 9 students with disabilities on a 504 Plan participated in a paid work opportunity similar to Project Skills.
- The Division implemented a new policy to provide job placement and support services for high school and post-secondary students who participate in employer paid work experiences.
- The Division collaborates with the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) to improve the education, training, and employment opportunities and outcomes of young adults, ages 18-24,

with disabilities who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or receiving Social Security disability benefits.

- The Division has enrolled 111 students with disabilities who are receiving SSI. This initiative called the ASPIRE grant (PROMISE Initiative) is a research grant to provide additional interventions to half of the students.
- The Division funds 3 Project Search initiatives serving 18 students in school year 2015. Division is expanding a new Project Search site in Rapid City.
- The Division is funding 9 establishment grants to expand supported employment services which will provide employment opportunities for 32 youth with disabilities.
- On August 11, 2015, the Division released the “Ability for Hire” campaign, which is an outreach campaign emphasizing the promotion of hiring, advancement, and retention of employment for people with disabilities in South Dakota’s workforce. As a part of this, the Division developed a brochure tailored towards youth with disabilities informing them of various scopes of information in the form of potential services they may receive as they work towards their career goals, information on the Transition Services Liaison Project, and information on post-secondary resources. The brochures will be beneficial for the Division’s personnel, students, parents, and teachers.
- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Project collaborated with over 75 individuals and community organizations to host the seventeenth annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF). YLF is a five-day event intended for high school students with disabilities to explore personal leadership and career plans. Many individuals and organizations are directly impacted or involved in the leadership, self-advocacy and career awareness training for these students.

Strategy 1.3: Educate teachers, students and parents about Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Division Activities: The Division provides education to teachers, students and parents about Vocational Rehabilitation Services through one on one contact, school meetings, attendance at IEP’s and presentations to educators. The Division also maintains relationships with WRIL, Parent Connection, DLR, SD Advocacy, and other community agencies to assist with community awareness/referral to VR services. Specific activities include:

- The Division participated in a DEI partnership meeting on October 8, 2015 at Western Dakota Technical Institute.
- The Division maintains a list of the VR Counselor and contact information assigned each school. This information is distributed at meetings with educators.
- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Project hosted 9 Regional Transition Forums in 8 communities across the state with a total of 321 individuals attending. The Forums provided an opportunity for the participants to learn about and meet the various service providers in the area (i.e. Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Benefits Counselors, IL Services, DD Resource Coordinators, Community Support Providers, and Assistive Technology Services).
- Division staff has been conducting meetings with teachers and other school staff who work with students with disabilities. This has expanded into having booths at job fairs, parent/teacher conferences and presenting to students/teachers at post-secondary preparation meetings.
- Division staff have presented twice at the USD Master’s Program in Special Education and also the Sinte Gleska University Human Services Master’s Degree program.

- The Division has established a Project Skills workgroup to review current practices and policies. This workgroup consists of Transition Services Liaison staff, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Special Education personnel.

Strategy 1.4: Expand transition services that have demonstrated effectiveness through evidence based practices identified in follow-up surveys for Indicator 14, which is the outcome measure one year after high school for students who were on an Individual Education Plan.

Division Activities: Indicator 14 measures outcomes compared to various transition services. The Division is developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of Special Education to access Indicator 14 information for each school district. Successful transition services which demonstrate effectiveness for Indicator 14 are work experiences and self-advocacy training.

Outcomes during FFY 2015 consist of:

- Project SEARCH is a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities in their last year of high school. It provides students a chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. It is an internship program that places students in real-world situations where they learn all aspects of gaining and maintaining a job. South Dakota currently has three Project SEARCH sites, Avera St. Lukes Hospital in Aberdeen, SD State University in Brookings and Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls. The Division has expanded the number of Project Search sites from three to four to include Rapid City Regional as the new business site. The initial start-up meeting for the Rapid City site was held on November 16 & 17, 2015.
- The Division has partnered with other agencies in funding Augie Access, a post-secondary program for individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- The Division continues to fund Project Skills paid work experience but has expanded to funding paid work experiences for students with disabilities who are not on an IEP.
- The Division has implemented a policy to provide job placement and supports for employer paid work experiences.
- The Division has continued to fund the Transition Services Liaison Program that implements the Youth Leadership Form, Catch the Wave and Regional forums.
- The Division, Office of Special Education and the Transition Services Liaison Project hosted four, one-day Indicator workshops for high school special education teachers in four communities across the state. The workshops were held in Rapid City, Mitchell, Sioux Falls and Aberdeen. The content included Indicator 14 data retrieval, assessing post-school outcomes for individual school districts, best practices in reaching quality post-school outcomes and strategies in enhancing Indicator 13 best practices. A total of 153 participants attended these trainings.
- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Project hosted a two-day Project SEARCH training titled "Reaching the Goal of 100% Employment". The training event was free to Project SEARCH site staff and was held in Brookings on January 5 & 6, 2015. Twenty-one people participated in the event and played an important role in the function of a current Project SEARCH site or the development of a new program.
- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Project TSLP collaborated with the Center for Disabilities to host a two day teacher workshop (summer institute) which focused on three primary evidence based practice areas (work experience, self-determination and interagency collaboration). Fifty-one people attended the event which included 45 special education

teachers, five service providers and one parent. One graduate credit was available for attending the workshop and an additional credit was available for special education teachers that developed an action plan and implemented a new evidence based practice within their school district. Eleven individuals took advantage of this opportunity and are implementing a new strategy to improve post-school outcomes for their students.

Strategy 1.5: Implement outreach and informed choice strategies for youth who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Division Activities: The Division promotes services to youth who are deaf or hard of hearing. Activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division works closely with the Deaf Education Coordinators at the South Dakota School for the Deaf to make referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division had a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor participate in the PEPNET initiative. PEPNET is a federally funded project whose mission is to increase the education, career, and lifetime choices available to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The Division assisted in expanding the transition section on the SD School for the Deaf website. The website changes are expected to be completed by February 2016.
- The Division revised the transition handout specifically for individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients.
- The Division purchased UbiDuo machines that provide communication options in three District Offices. Training was provided to the Division staff in utilization of these machines.

Strategy 1.6: Conduct outreach activities to students with disabilities and their family members to provide information on vocational rehabilitation services.

Division Activities: The Division has expanded its efforts to increase referrals from students with disabilities and their family members. Activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- This past year the Division developed an outreach campaign with a marketing firm to develop marketing materials and promotions.
- The Division sponsored websites such as “Ability to Hire” and Freedom to Work which provide specific information geared for youth with disabilities and their family members.
- A brochure was developed specifically to provide information on Vocational Rehabilitation Services for students with disabilities and their family members.
- The District Offices have developed a directory of Special Education staff and 504 Coordinators to make referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division distributed an introductory letter for students and their parents that was distributed on the Office of Special Education’s list serve.
- The Division presented at the South Dakota Parent Connection MyFILE trainings in Aberdeen on 2/10/2015 and Rapid City 3/28/2015. The MyFILE is a transition to adulthood tool.
- The Division staff participates in Community Fairs and other community activities to provide information about Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division has been having booths at job fairs, parent/teacher conferences and presenting to students/teachers at post-secondary preparation meetings.

Strategy 1.7: Increase and strengthen transition services for students who are Native Americans or other minorities with disabilities exploring employment future.

Division Activities: South Dakota currently has four American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation (AIVR) Programs. The Division has cooperative agreements with all four AIVR Programs. Activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Cooperative Agreement with the Standing Rock AIVR was updated to include new language of coordination of services for students with disabilities.
- The Division amended the Cooperative Agreement with the Oglala AIVR Program to work more closely with their program during the lapse of funding to assure continuation of services for Native Americans with disabilities on the Oglala Reservation. The Division will be opening an office in Kyle, South Dakota in addition to a weekly presence in Kyle and Pine Ridge office locations.
- On December 16, 2014, The Division held a meeting with the 4 AIVR Programs with a major part of the agenda focused on transition services for students with disabilities. A similar meeting is being scheduled on December 15, 2015 to include the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division, in partnership with the four AIVR Programs, has a booth each year at the Lakota Nation Invitational (LNI) held in Rapid City.
- The Division and the ASPIRE Grant are working jointly with the Tribal Councils to obtain research approval on their reservations. Research approval has been received from Oglala, Standing Rock, Lake Traverse, Crow Creek, and Rosebud Reservations.
- The Division, in partnership with the Transition Services Liaison Project, conducted transition forums on the Oglala Reservation on December 2014 and March 2015. A total of 74 people attended these two events.
- On October 7, 2015, The Division and Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services partnered and participated with the Oun'iyekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, in hosting a disability awareness event.
- The Division and Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services participated in the Disability Services Summit on April 28th at Sinte Gleska University in Mission, South Dakota.
- The Division provided MyFILES for the four American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Programs to utilize with Native American students with disabilities.
- Division staff continues to meet with teachers from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and Tribal Schools. This initiative has expanded to meeting monthly with students with disabilities.

Goal 2: A strong statewide community with DRS presence and partnerships with business, service providers, schools and service organizations.

Strategy 2.1: Increase the service capacity and quality of services delivered through the service providers.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- Beginning in January 1, 2016, the Division awarded 9 establishment grants to Community Support Providers to expand the supported employment services program. This initiative is funding 11.6 FTE new employment specialists/job coaches who will develop community employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities currently residing in a segregated

employment setting and/or under the age of 24. These 9 grants are estimated to assist 66 additional individuals in obtaining community employment.

- The Division currently has contracts with 42 private individuals to provide job placement and job coaching services.
- Beginning June 1, 2015 the Division promoted providers to become Certified Employment Support Professionals. The Division has hosted 4 examinations where 75 individuals have taken the examination and 50 individuals have been approved.

Strategy 2.2: Strengthen partnerships with the business community.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division has five District offices and two of them presently have private non-profit entities that are business-led models led by employers providing education, resources, and training to promote the hiring and retention of people with disabilities to the business community. These two business led initiatives funded by the Division are the Business Resource Network in Sioux Falls and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills. The Division is providing the opportunity to the three remaining District offices for funding seed grants up to \$10,000 to establish new business-led models. The purpose of these seed grants is to expand employer organizations providing education, consultation, and technical assistance to businesses on hiring individuals with disabilities in the community. Letters of interest have been received from two Chambers of Commerce and a Human Resource Management Association. The contracts with these entities will begin on January 1, 2016.
- Division staff from each District are members of non-disability organizations in efforts to connect with employers. These organizations consist of the Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the South Dakota Retailers Association. There is a total of 14 staff who are members of the Chamber of Commerce and SHRM associations. These opportunities allows for connecting with businesses to learn more about their workforce needs and identify any training opportunities and other areas to collaborate.
- The Division and the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation promote and fund initiatives across South Dakota to promote National Disability Employment Awareness Month. In October 2015, there were 12 locations/events that took place where business leaders and employers attended.
- On August 11, 2015, the Division conducted a webinar training to the South Dakota Retailers Association. 26 businesses participated in the training and an additional 43 businesses watched the recording of the training at a later date. The webinar is available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_w6PbqG0dY&feature=youtu.be.

Strategy 2.3: Strengthen partnerships with organizations serving Native Americans and other minorities with disabilities.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division in partnership with the four AIRV Programs have a booth each year at the Lakota Nation Invitational (LNI) held in Rapid City.
- The Division and the ASPIRE Grant are working jointly with the Tribal Councils to obtain research approval on their reservations. Approval has been received from Oglala, Standing Rock, Lake Traverse, Crow Creek, and Rosebud Reservations.
- The Division, in partnership with the Transition Services Liaison Project, conducted transition forums on the Oglala Reservation on December 2014 and March 2015. A total of 74 people attended these two events. On October 7, 2015, The Division and Board of Vocational

Rehabilitation Services partnered and participated with the Oun'iyekiyapi Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, in hosting a disability awareness event.

- The Division and Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services participated in the Disability Services Summit on April 28th at Sinte Gleska University in Mission, South Dakota.
- The Huron Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor presented to the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation about the provision of services to minority population in the Huron, South Dakota area.
- There is an AIVR Director representation on the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Statewide Independent Living Council.
- The Division amended the Cooperative Agreement with the Oglala AIVR Program to work more closely with their program during the lapse of funding to assure continued services for Native Americans with disabilities on the Oglala Reservation. The Division will be opening an office in Kyle, South Dakota in addition to provide a weekly staff presence in Kyle and Pine Ridge office locations.
- On December 16, 2014, The Division held a meeting with the four AIVR Programs with a major part of the agenda focused on transition services for Native American students with disabilities. A similar meeting is being scheduled on December 15, 2015 to include the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

Strategy 2.4: Coordinate vocational rehabilitation services with the elementary and secondary school systems.

Division Activities: The Division has expanded efforts to increase referrals from elementary and secondary school districts. Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division has presented several times to special educators at events hosted by the Transition Services Liaison Project (TSLP) to increase knowledge and awareness of Vocational Rehabilitation Services available.
- The Division meets with school personnel/teachers to explain VR services and increase referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division works with the TSLP Specialists seeking assistance and direction with increasing referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- The Division participates in Transition Forums, Catch the Wave, Career Days and Youth Leadership Forum activities.
- Division staff have been meeting with the Middle School staff (guidance counselor and Special Education staff) where presentations and discussions have begun about Vocational Rehabilitation staff being present during parent teacher conferences to help with beginning the transition discussion for students with disabilities before the age of 14 and preparing for high school.

Strategy 2.5: Strengthen working relationships with entities, agencies, and organizations to enhance the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to underserved rural areas.

Division Activities: A significant portion of South Dakota is considered rural and remote. Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division has expanded private providers to Belle Fourche, Mission, Sisseton, Huron, Mobridge, Webster, White River and Wentworth to help provide services in rural areas of the State.

- The Division provides services to rural areas by being physically present in those areas. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors travel to these areas and meet with local businesses, agencies, clinics, etc., to promote VR services for citizens.
- The Division utilizes social media (Facebook, Twitter), websites, and TV commercials to inform South Dakota residents about Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Strategy 2.6: Strengthen the extended services for assuring successful employment for supported employment clients.

Division Activities: South Dakota has 19 nonprofit community agencies serving people with developmental disabilities referred to as Community Support Providers who provide extended services for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The State also has 11 community mental health centers that provide extended services for individuals with mental illness. Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- Beginning in January 1, 2016, the Division awarded 9 establishment grants to Community Support Providers to expand the supported employment services program. This initiative is funding 11.6 FTE new employment specialists/job coaches who will develop community employment options for individuals with intellectual disabilities currently working in a segregated employment setting and/or under the age of 24. These 9 grants are estimated to assist 66 additional individuals in obtaining community employment.
- The Division partners with 42 provider agencies with the Ticket to Work initiative to promote choice of services and extended services for individuals who receive Social Security Administration benefits.

Strategy 2.7: State Government will be a model employer in increasing the employment of people with disabilities in State Government.

Division Activities: South Dakota became a model state for disability employment in part because Governor Dennis Daugaard has a personal interest in the subject as a son of two deaf parents. As a member of the National Governors Association, Gov. Daugaard supported Gov. Markell's Better Bottom Line Initiative and he helped organize hearings on finding employment solutions for people with disabilities. Furthermore, South Dakota created the Employment Works Task Force, which develops hiring solutions for people with disabilities. In addition the Division recently launched its new Ability for Hire program, which alters public perceptions and touts the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Ability for Hire's approach to achieving this ambitious goal is through networking, educating, and informing supervisors, businesses, and the general public about what individuals with disabilities have to offer.

Respect Ability published an article on September 29, 2015 titled "The Best-and Worst-States for Workers with Disabilities". In this article, South Dakota was identified as the 3rd best state leading the nation in creating more job opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The State of South Dakota has promoted Project Skills within State Government. In FFY 2015 10 students with disabilities participated in the Project Skills Program, a paid work experiences within State agencies.

The Division has been proactive in providing training to State Government personnel managers. The Division conducted the following initiatives:

- Presented about Vocational Rehabilitation Services at the Manager's Conference in October 2014.

- Promoted Project Skills in State agencies where 10 students with disabilities gained work experiences.
- Conducted ADA assessments to assure accessibility of state agencies to include physical and programmatic access for individuals with disabilities.
- All state positions are now listed with on-line Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP).
- Assisted with the Job Accommodation Network to provide training to Bureau of Human Resources Personnel Managers.

Goal 3: DRS clients will have greater access to transportation services needed to obtain and maintain employment.

Strategy 3.1: Increase knowledge of the current transportation systems and compatibility with the employment systems.

Division Activities: The Division participates in local Mayor's Advisory Committees for People with Disabilities to promote ways to increase the transportation capacity at the local level. The Aberdeen Mayor's Advisory Committee has a transportation committee and recently they were able to increase their fleet by another two vehicles. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors remain familiar with transportation options in the communities they are serving, and work to offer clients informed choices on transportation options.

Strategy 3.2: Promote the participation of disability agencies and local communities to improve transportation services.

Division Activities: The Division works closely with local workgroups with the intention of improving transportation in communities across the State. The most common community workgroup model is the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities. Through the Division's involvement, accessible city buses are now available to citizens and clearing of sidewalks is being promoted in communities. Other communities have promoted increasing Dial-A-Ride services for citizens with more significant impairments.

Strategy 3.3: Improve the availability of transportation for Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

Division Activities: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in each community work to identify needs or gaps in transportation for their clients. Recently Aberdeen Ride Line reinstated their transportation service, allowing people from Aberdeen to reach the Jefferson Bus lines which allows travel for other employment opportunities. During FFY 2015, the Division funded transportation services for 423 clients for a total of \$125,607.

Goal 4: A VR Services delivery system that results in enhanced earnings, employee benefits, retention and career advancement for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Strategy 4.1: Improve the employment retention of Vocational Rehabilitation clients.

Division Activities: On-going supports and training to providers are key elements to improve employment retention for individuals with disabilities. Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division continues providing Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors motivational interviewing training. This training allows VR counselors to better understand the stages of change and work with clients in moving towards the action of employment.
- Providers are entering into agreements to assure plans for sustaining employment allow for employment supports to continue.
- The Division has agreements with 42 service providers to continue the on-going supports for Social Security beneficiaries.
- The Division has provided free job development webinar trainings from Kenfield Consulting Services. Thirty-one agencies took part in these webinars during the past year.
- The Division is piloting a project with a post closure survey for clients who do not qualify for supported employment or Plans for Sustaining Employment. At this time there are approximately 4 clients and employers who are contacted by job placement providers quarterly for a year after successful closure. The survey indicates all four individuals have maintained their employment and one individual increased their work hours from part time to full time employment.

Strategy 4.2: Track the earnings for SSA beneficiaries and implement actions to increase the earnings and employment rate of clients who are SSA beneficiaries.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- During FFY 2015, 364 SSA recipients were closed successfully. At the time of application, 92% of those individuals were unemployed or had wages less than Trial Work. At the time of closure, 27% had wages between Trial Work and Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), and 21% had wages above SGA.
- The Division provided Benefits Counseling to 251 SSA recipients who were closed in FFY 2015. The Division created 445 Individual Plans for Employment that included Benefits Counseling Services.

Strategy 4.3: Provide specialized support services based upon individual's unique needs to keep their employment.

Division Activities: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors work with the applicant/client in identifying their unique needs and abilities to maintain their employment. Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- Vocational Rehabilitation clients are offered the informed choice of working with benefits specialists and independent living specialists in their area.
- The Division has implemented a Person Centered Thinking (PCT) approach which focuses on the individual's health and safety while looking at employment goals.
- The Division, Service Provider and Individual with a disability enter into an agreement at the time of employment on roles/responsibilities to assist the individual to sustain their employment. The Division implemented 245 Plans for Sustaining Employment in FFY 15.
- The Division provided Interpreting services to 55 individuals, Personal Attendant services to 7 individuals, and Disability Related Skills Training to 56 individuals during FFY 2015.

Strategy 4.4: Strengthen the Benefits Specialists services for VR clients.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division has increased the number of Benefits Specialists from 4 to 6 positions. These positions are located in each Division District and available to provide benefits specialist

services for Social Security Recipients. These staff have received their certification from Virginia Commonwealth University.

- Two staff from the ASPIRE project have been certified as Benefits Specialists and will be available to deliver services to all individuals when their grant is completed.

Strategy 4.5: Strengthen the Ticket to Work initiatives for Social Security beneficiaries.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division and the Transition Services Liaison Project hosted an “Employment & SSA Benefits” workshop for youth in transition in Aberdeen on March 16, 2015. This was a two and a half hour presentation on SSA benefits, resources available and work-incentives available to youth while gaining work experiences. Sixteen people attended this training.
- The Division and South Dakota Benefits Specialist Network hosted four “Work Incentives for People with Disabilities” workshops for service providers, state agency staff and VR counselors. Seventy individuals attended these workshops.
- In April 2014, the Division funded SSA Work Incentive trainings for SSA beneficiaries in Aberdeen, Yankton, Watertown, Rapid City, Mobridge and Sioux Falls. Approximately 50 individuals attended these trainings.

Strategy 4.6: Increase work experience opportunities for adults with disabilities.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- During FFY 2015, 22 individuals participated in a paid work experience program.
- During FFY 2015, The Division assisted 608 individuals and paid \$46,678 for On the Job Training reimbursements to employers. During FFY 2015, The Division paid \$104,738 to service providers to conduct Situational Assessments at various job sites.
- During FFY 2015, The Division assisted 863 individuals and paid \$228,615 to service providers to provide job coaching support services at the job sites.

Strategy 4.7: Promote the development & utilization of vocational skills training for individuals in South Dakota.

Division Activities: Outcomes and activities promoting this strategy consist of:

- The Division is co-funding Augie Access, a new post-secondary program for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Augie Access started with four students in August of 2015 and is working on efforts to recruit additional students for the next school year.
- During FFY 2015, the Division assisted 13 individuals attending graduate level college; 172 individuals attending a four year college; 28 individuals attending a junior college; and 92 individuals attending a vocational training program.

Strategy 4.8: Meet or exceed performance levels established for the Performance Indicators under Evaluation Standard 1- Employment Outcomes & Standard 2 – Equal Access to Services (established in 34 CFR Sec. 361.84(c)(1) of the Federal Regulations).

Division Activities: The Division monitors these indicators during the year and at each District Level. The Division has met these performance standards for FFY 2015.

Goal 5: DRS clients will have the skills, motivation and supports necessary to make an informed choice for successful daily living, money management, personal and work relationships.

Strategy 5.1: Implement strategies and tools for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in assessing the motivational state of VR clients as to their desire for employment.

Division Activities: In April and May 2015 all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were able to attend the motivational interviewing training. This expanded on previous trainings to allow VR Counselors a more thorough understanding of motivational interviewing techniques to use with clients. Through this training counselors continue to work with clients in determining their stage of change and develop internal motivation for employment goals. August 5 & 6, 2015 Division management staff attended additional training on Motivational Interviewing techniques to be incorporated into supervisory styles and ensure that supervisors are aware of the information that counselors are working with clients on. Motivational Interviewing has also been incorporated as an area that will be reviewed in Counselor's annual review process.

Strategy 5.2: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will utilize strategies and tools for assessing critical strengths and deficits in the client's personal life status and skills.

Division Activities: Through motivational interviewing and person centered thinking training, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have established further tools and strategies to utilize in assessing clients readiness to change. This includes reviewing the client's health, safety, and vocational goals to ensure that all services are in place for them to be successful. These tools have been made available electronically for VR Counselors to access. The Division has also implemented Person Centered Thinking (PCT) coaches in each district. These coaches allow mentor other staff in the PCT practices within the district offices.

Strategy 5.3: Develop potential provider supports for life skills development.

Division Activities: The Division utilizes service providers to deliver various social and life skills development areas including advocacy Skills to Pay the Bills curriculum and the Top 20 for Teens training material. In addition the Centers for Independent Living have established summer transition training programs providing transition age youth learning opportunities in life skills areas. The Aberdeen District Office has implemented weekly trainings for transition students ages 16 to 21. This training allows students to gain further life/social skills and information as they transition out of high school.

Strategy 5.4: Increase the utilization of self-employment as an employment outcome for VR clients.

Division Activities: In April 2015 self-employment training was provided to VR counselors across the state. Self-employment is an area that is emphasized as a viable employment option for individuals with disabilities. With South Dakota having many rural areas this can be a possibility where community-based employment may not be available in certain employment interest areas. During FFY 2015 six individuals were closed successfully in self-employment.

Federal Program Evaluation Standards

In accordance with the provisions of the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education proposed the following evaluation standards (see Federal Register Vol.63, No. 198 issued on October 14, 1998 on Proposed Rules, pages 55292- 55305). The proposed standards 1 and 4 are based on section 106 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P. L. 105-220 of August 7, 1998), which contains the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. The proposed standards 2, 3, and 5 are not based on the Workforce Investment Act, but the Secretary believes that they are important factors in successful rehabilitation programs. Standards 1 and 2 have been finalized as published in the Federal Register Vol.65, No. 108 issued on June 5, 2000, pages 35792 - 35801. The remaining standards have not yet been finalized.

Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

Standard 1 is based on section 106 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (P. L. 105-220 of August 7, 1998), which contains the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. This standard requires an agency to assist eligible individuals with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, to obtain, maintain, or regain high quality employment outcomes. The quality of an employment outcome is based on whether the outcome is consistent with the individual's vocational choices; is in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment; maintains or increases the individual's earnings; and allows medical insurance plans covering hospitalization. The following six performance indicators measure minimum compliance with this standard.

1. 1. Compare the total numbers of individuals obtaining an employment outcome during the current and previous performance periods.
- 1.2 Measure the number of persons obtaining an employment outcome as a percentage of all persons exiting the program after receiving VR services.
- 1.3. Measure the number of persons obtaining a competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment outcome as a percentage of all persons obtaining any type of employment outcome. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.4. Measure the percentage of competitively employed individuals who have significant disabilities. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.5. Measure the average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earnings levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed. **Primary Indicator**
- 1.6. Measure the difference between the percentage of individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage who report their own income as their largest single source of economic support and the percentage of individuals in that employment who reported their own income as their largest single source of support at the time they applied for VR services.

Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

Standard 2 requires compliance with one performance indicator which measures equality of access to rehabilitation services.

- 2.1. Measure whether individuals from minority backgrounds have been provided services at the same rate as non-minority individuals.

Assessment of the State VR Agency in meeting the Performance Standards and Indicators

The Division of Rehabilitation Services has been monitoring the development of the performance standards and indicators. Utilizing the FFY 2015 data, the Division's performance was evaluated in meeting the minimum requirements for Standards 1 and 2. The following chart displays the outcome of this assessment.

Standard/Indicator	Minimum Requirement	Division's Outcome	Indicator Met
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	4 of the 6 Indicators and 2 of the 3 Primary Indicators	6 of the 6 Indicators and 3 Primary Indicators were met	
Indicator 1.1	862	769	No
Indicator 1.2	55.8%	68.54%	Yes
Indicator 1.3 *	72.6%	100%	Yes
Indicator 1.4 *	62.4%	99.3%	Yes
Indicator 1.5 *	\$9.57 (estimated)	\$10.27	Yes
Indicator 1.6	53%	59.61%	Yes
Standard 2: Equal Access to Services	The Indicator must be met	The Indicator was met	
Indicator 2.1	80%	82.26%	Yes

* Designates Primary Indicators

Past Utilization of Innovation and Expansion Funds

Section 101 (a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended requires the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency to reserve and use a portion of the funds for:

(i) The development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State; and

(ii) To support the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

Prior to the 1998 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act, the Division of Rehabilitation Services was required to utilize 1.5% of the Federal 110 funds for Innovation and Expansion (I&E) activities. The Division continues to use these funds at an increased percentage. During the 2015 State Fiscal year, \$147,626.74 was spent for I&E activities through a contract with the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities to provide staff support for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Independent Living Council. The contract provides for the following:

- ✓ Support staff for the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council contracted through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. This includes wages and benefits for .9 FTE Board support staff.
- ✓ Operational costs, equipment and travel for support staff and office supplies paid through the South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities.
- ✓ Costs involved in having members of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation or the Statewide Independent Living Council attend meetings/training.
- ✓ Strategic Planning Initiatives approved by the Board of VR to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment and goals and priorities of the State.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services budgets approximately \$183,346 annually for support services and strategic planning activities for both the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council. Expenditures for the strategic planning activities for FY 2015 consist of the following:

Amount	Expense
\$1,574.33	Support of 2014 Governors Awards Ceremony
\$100	Board's Organizational membership dues and donation for Coalition
\$474.81	Rapid City BW Ramkota Joint meeting with Division/Tribal VR staff (Dec 2014)
\$2,000	Support of Lighting the Way/Solutions for Success: Diagnosis Through Adulthood Conference
\$222.48	Support of Public meeting held in Mission April 28 2015 (supplies)
\$200	Support of Mission Public Meeting
\$400	Presentation on Person Centered Training Thinking Tools
\$118.25	Sioux Falls Rubber Stamp - Name Badges for Board members
\$12,000.00	Financial support of NDEAM activities held across the state
\$17,089.87	Total Expenditures